

A Tour Of The Ironbound

by the NEWARK PRESERVATION & LANDMARKS COMMITTEE

To many people, the strip of land east of Penn Station is an unknown entity, almost another city. This tour brochure will help take you through that unique area, The IRONBOUND.

The Ironbound also known locally as "Down Neck" because of its location along the neck of the Passaic River, is surrounded by railroad tracks and is bordered roughly by New Jersey Routes 1 & 9 and South Street. During the city's early years and into the first two decades of the 19th century, the Ironbound was occupied largely by a handful of farmers. German and Irish immigrants were the first foreigners to arrive and they were instrumental in supplying the labor for the new industries beginning to locate in this neighborhood. The relative isolation of the Ironbound proved to be a natural inducement to industry and with the completion of the Morris Canal in the 1830's, brewing, tanning, leather, iron and chemicals flourished in the "Neck". Later, waves of new immigrants from southern and eastern Europe, largely Italians, Jews, Polish and Lithuanians, as well as Blacks from the South, arrived in Newark. Recently, Portuguese and Hispanics have continued the trend which has made this area traditionally the "haven for the immigrant". Most came to seek employment and/or a better way of life. They constructed their homes and churches close to the factories where they worked and the work ethic became a strong motivating factor in their lives.

The Ironbound has changed little in recent years. The area's neat, compact homes are among the best-kept in Newark. On its narrow, clean streets, an assortment of uses is evident, with industrial and commercial enterprises in co-existence with residences. "Down Neck" has maintained its charm as a neighborhood of two and three story, frame houses, usually built rather close together, and often on a street lined with mature Sycamores.

While many neighborhoods in Newark have experienced a dramatic decline in recent years, this, an area once thought to have the most expendable housing stock in the city has remained stable. Its crime rate is lower than the overall rate in Newark and its inhabitants are a strong and hearty group. The area's success is often attributed to a fierce community fervor, pride in home ownership and love of God and family.

Urbanologists would do well to study this area very closely, for the residents of this small enclave of the East Ward of Newark have not only discovered the formula for defeating urban decay, but have found a way to reverse its trends. Through hard work, pride, community spirit, strong faith and belief in the family system, the citizens of the Ironbound have guaranteed posterity that this, Newark's most interesting community, will remain an attractive and distinct neighborhood for years to come.



St. James Roman Catholic Church

(1) PENNSYLVANIA STATION. Constructed in 1933 and now undergoing rehabilitation and restoration, Pennsylvania Station forms a boundary between the Ironbound and the downtown areas of Newark. This impressive 292 foot long structure, finished in Indiana limestone, contains many fine Art Deco details, including wall reliefs and ceiling sculpture. The total cost of construction was about \$10 million. This facility brings together railroad, rapid transit, subway and long distance and local bus terminals in a single building. The station is on the National Register.

(2) MOTHER CARRINI PARK. This 1/2 acre park was named in honor of Saint Frances Xavier Cabrini, the first American citizen canonized by the Roman Catholic Church. The bust of Jose Marti, a Cuban liberator, is at the east end of the park.

(3) PETER FRANCISCO PARK. Also located on the east end of Penn Station, this small sitting park is named in honor of Peter Francisco, a Portuguese patriot of the American War of Independence.

(4) OUR LADY OF MT. CARMEL ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH. Constructed as the Second Dutch Reformed Church in 1847-1849, this greatly altered building was converted into a Catholic house of worship in 1890 by Italian immigrants. Architect William Kirk was the original designer of what was a Classical, center-steeped edifice. The tall spire was shortened and modified and the columned portico and stucco exterior are of 20th century vintage. Construction of a new church of the same name left this edifice vacant. The Ironbound Educational & Cultural Center now occupies the building.

(5) FERRY STREET. Created in 1785 by an act of the state legislature which authorized the Old Ferry Road, this street became part of the first direct route between Newark and the Hudson River. In 1849, the old roadbed of rough logs was lifted and replaced with smooth planks. The name was also changed to Plank Road and tolls were instituted. In 1899, when its charter expired, the road was turned over to the custody of Essex and Hudson counties. In 1913, it was rejuvenated to become part of the Lincoln Highway. Today, the western part of the street is a vibrant, bustling thoroughfare. Its enterprises are seldom minus business and the street seldom without traffic jams. Ferry Street is the commercial heart of the Ironbound and epitomizes the "alive" nature of the area. The Portuguese and Hispanic influence is readily evident.

(6) CHRIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH. This heavy brownstone church, built in 1848-50, is an outstanding example of early American-English Gothic style architecture. Its architect, Frank Willis, built the church in a district surrounded by factories, to serve "the humblest of neighborhoods". This noble landmark, now vacant and deteriorating badly, is in desperate need of an adaptive use. Christ Church is most likely the finest example of its style in the State.

(7) SAINT JOSEPH'S ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH. Constructed in 1858 by architect John P. Huber, this building was, until 1928, the Fifth Baptist Church. In 1928, the Spanish and Portuguese people of the Ironbound joined forces and obtained the church. The brick, modified Greek Revival edifice lost its spire some years ago. The Portuguese left the parish when their own church, Our Lady of Fatima was built in the mid-1950s.

In 1966 a new church was built on Lafayette Street, replacing St. Joseph's, named Immaculate Heart of Mary. The old church is now used as for occasional masses and as a grammar school annex. The most interesting aspect of the old church is the catacombs which are replicas of those which exist in Rome.

(8) OUR LADY OF FATIMA ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH. Constructed in 1958 for the large and growing Portuguese population of the Ironbound, Fatima is a modern, orange-brick building with limestone trim. M. George Vulovich of Englewood Cliffs was the architect. The church represents the first edifice ever built exclusively for the Portuguese in Newark.

(9) SAINT JAMES ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH. Recently demolished, this masterpiece was constructed in 1863-1866 of local brownstone. The massive Gothic style church was the heart and soul of the then predominantly Irish area. Catholicism's most prolific architect, Patrick C. Keely designed Saint James. Parishioners not only donated the funds to construct the building, but performed much of the actual work. The exterior featured a tall 235' spire that dominated the area and could be seen from most major highways in the vicinity. The church was listed on the National Register and was demolished for a parking lot in 1979.

(10) MURPHY VARNISH COMPANY. Started in 1865, this once vast operation was the largest varnish complex in Newark. Varnish was the city's fifth largest industry at the turn of the century. At that time, six major structures comprised the complex, of which only two are now extant. One of the earliest buildings was designed

ed by renowned architect, Howard Chase. Murphy Varnish is the first industrial site in Newark nominated to the National Register of Historic Places.

(11) INDEPENDENCE PARK. Originally Eastside Park, this 12.5 acre tract was developed by the Essex County Park Commission in 1896 as one of the first "neighborhood parks" established in Newark. In 1922, local community leaders petitioned the park commission requesting the name be changed to Independence Park, in honor of the thousands of foreign-born residents who had settled here to find the democratic way. The official name-change was effective July 4, 1923. The park features broad, green lawns and winding walks, as well as an assortment of mature sycamores. This park is the largest in the Ironbound. The Essex County Park Commission, which administers Independence Park, is the oldest park commission in the nation.

(12) HOLY TRINITY LITHUANIAN CATHOLIC CHURCH. This brick structure represents the Lithuanian influx into the Ironbound around the turn-of-the-century. The church was built in 1917 by the architectural firm of Hughes and Horton, and it replaced a wood edifice nearby. Holy Trinity resembles a twin towered Venetian "friari" church, similar to those in Venice. The once substantial Lithuanian population is still but dispersed to the suburbs and the Renaissance Church is in need of repair.

(13) OUR LADY OF MOUNT CARMEL ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH. Constructed in 1955, Mount Carmel replace the mission-like structure near Penn Station which served the Italian-American of the area for more than 60 years. Cesar D' Sica designed the modern, orange-brick, traditional Italian edifice. The construction of this church represents the shift of the Italian population to the area south of Independence Park.

(14) SAINT MICHAEL'S RUSSIAN ORTHODOX GREEK CATHOLIC CHURCH. Built in 1910, this orange brick structure has three lovely gold onion domes, originally copper but recently fiberglassed. Both the fiberglassing of the domes and the brick-work, performed in 1954, were attempts to deal with the pollution caused by the heavy industrialization of the area. Today, the parish consists of about 350 people most of whom are of Russian/East European background. Only about 30 families live in the neighborhood. The church adds aesthetically to the park environment.

(15) SAINT CASIMIR'S ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH. This edifice, built in 1919, served the substantial Polish-American population of the area. Italian Renaissance in style, Saint Casimir's

Ironbound Dining Guide

Besides being labeled the "most interesting" neighborhood in Newark, the Ironbound is also the "restaurant capital of the city". The flavor is distinctly Iberian. In fact, the dominance of the Spanish and Portuguese influence is nowhere more dramatically manifested than in the food of the area. The following is a list of some of the best establishments in "Down Neck".

- A. THE SPAIN RESTAURANT, 419 Market Street (adjacent Penn Station) - 344-0994. Open daily 11:30 am - 10 pm & 11 pm on weekends. Dinner and lunch available. Small well-respected establishment with limited, but interesting menu. MC, Visa & AE.
- B. FORNO'S, 47 Ferry Street - 589-4767. Open daily 12 noon - 11 pm & weekends till midnight. Spanish cuisine & entertainment in quality and abundance. Conveniently located one block from Penn Station. AE & DC.
- C. ROQUE & REBELD, 90 Ferry Street - 589-4474. Open daily from 12 noon - 11 pm. Dinner & lunch served. No cards accepted.
- D. SPANISH TAVERN II, 104 McWhorter Street (corner of Green Street) - 589-4959. Open Monday - Saturday 11:30 am - 10:30 pm & Sunday 12 noon - 10:30 pm. An old Ironbound favorite recently refurbished after damaging fire. No credit cards.
- E. CASA VASCA, 141 Elm Street - 465-1350. Open daily 11 am - 10 pm. Dinner and lunch served daily. Spanish/Basque specialties dominate the menu. AE & DC.
- F. HABANA-MADRID, 204 Walnut Street (corner of Pacific Street) - 244-9710. This small Cuban cafe is excellent for a snack or a lunch of beans and rice. Very limited table service but plenty of counter space. Espresso served. Family-owned & operated. No cards.
- G. SANTA LUCIA VILLA, 198 Jefferson Street - 344-9715. Open Tuesday - Sunday 11:30 am to 10:30 pm. Closed Monday. The epitome of the family-owned and operated Ironbound restaurant. Italian cuisine. AE, Visa & MC.
- H. CHATEAU LISBOA, 384 Walnut Street (corner of Pulaski Street) - 589-9797. Open daily 11:30 am - 11:30 pm. Closed Monday. Awarded a three star rating from the New York Times. All major credit cards accepted.
- I. O'CAMPINO RESTAURANT, 70 Jabez Street (corner of New York Avenue) - 589-4004. Open Monday - Sunday 9:00 am - 11:30 pm. Cavernous restaurant for dining and banquets. Not uncommon to find diners mixing with wedding or anniversary party. Portuguese/ Spanish cuisine. All major credit cards accepted.
- J. TONY DaCANECA'S, 72 Elm Road - 589-6882. Open seven days a week 11:30 am - 10:30 pm. Portuguese specialties offered. MC, Visa & AE.
- K. CASA STOIA, 51 Saint Francis Street - 344-6091. Open seven days a week from 10 am - 10 pm. Italian specialties the rule. Dancing on Friday and Saturday evenings. Most major credit cards accepted.

- L. SOL-MAR RESTAURANT & LOUNGE, 267 Ferry Street - 344-3041. Open seven days a week from 12 noon - 9 pm Monday through Friday, 12 noon - 1 am Saturday & 12 noon - 10 pm Sunday. Located near X-Cel Plastics Company. No credit cards accepted.
- M. ALAMEDA ROOM, 248 Mulberry Street (corner of Elm Street) - 643-3996. Open seven days a week from 11:00 am - 11:00 pm. Lunch and dinner served daily. Portuguese and Spanish cuisine. Not in Ironbound proper, but close to downtown, post office and Federal building. AE & DC accepted.

At most of the Ironbound establishments listed, the price ranges from \$3 to \$6 for lunch and \$7 to \$12 for dinner. Portions run large, especially the Paella (can feed two). Reservations are usually required, however, at the Spain Restaurant, a first come, first served system is used.

Street Names in the Ironbound

The pride evident in the Ironbound is also evident in the street names. Many, as you will notice, are named after Presidents. Others are named in honor of patriots, American and foreign, and for European places and events. These most likely, were changed after World War I when sentiment against Germany was very strong. The Ironbound was settled largely by Germans in the mid-19th century and consequently, streets were named after German cities, provinces and people.

Ferry St. (was the Old Ferry Road), Hamilton St. (1st U.S. Sec. of Treasury, Alexander Hamilton), Green St. (Gov. Robert S. Green), McWhorter St. (Rev. Alexander McWhorter of Old First Church during the American Revolution), Bruen, St. (Matthias Bruen of Newark), East Kinney St. (Wm. B. Kinney of Newark), Pennington St. (Gov. Wm. Pennington), Tichenor St. (Stephan Tichenor, Newark clockmaker), Murray St. (Rev. Nicholas Murray of Elizabeth and Newark), Vanderpool St. (Eugene Vanderpool of Newark), Poinier St. (Mayor Henry Poinier), Miller St. (Mayor James Miller), Pulaski St. (Count Vladimir Pulaski, Polish Revolutionary), Schalk St. (Schalk brewery), Lister St. (the Lister works - "Listerine"), Darcy St. (Edward Darcy, explorer), Kossuth St. (Hungarian patriot), Stockton St. (Famous Princeton family), Napoleon St. (French emperor), Paterson St. (Gov. Wm. Paterson), Houston St. (Texan Sam Houston), Wall St. (Gov. Garret Wall), and Garrison St. (Abolitionist Wm. Lloyd Garrison).

World War I changes include: Hamburg Place to Wilson Avenue (Pres. Woodrow Wilson), Frederick St. to Somme St. (Famous WWI battle), Berlin St. to Rome St. (Italy was on our side during war), Bonykamper Ave. to Christie St., Bremen St. to Marne St. (famous battle during war), and Frankfort St. to Paris St. (France, too, was an ally), and Route 1 & 9 was named Dresden St. prior to its construction as a major highway in the 1920's.

Presidents names started with Jefferson, since Washington Street already existed in the James Street Commons area. Then came Adams for both presidents John and John Quincy, then Madison, Monroe, Jackson, Van Buren, Tyler (later changed to Pulaski St.), Polk, and Fillmore. Harrison is missing because of the Ironbound's proximity to the town of the same name across the Jackson Street Bridge and Taylor Street is already in the North Ward of Newark. The names of the presidents stop in the 1850's.

is especially fine in the interior. The seating capacity is very large and the church continues to anchor a considerable ethnic Polish neighborhood. The church also operates a grammar school on the premises.

(16) EAST SIDE HIGH SCHOOL. Now undergoing extensive renovations, including massive additions being built at front and in the rear. East Side is the Ironbound's and East Ward's only high school. Built in 1911 to provide the area's youth with an industrial and manual education, it remains today an essentially fine institution for technical training. The curriculum is, however, now multi-faceted. An auditorium and gymnasium were added in the 1950's. East Side remains the most ethnically and racially mixed school in Newark.

(17) HENSLEH HOUSE. Now used as the Bayus Funeral Home, the structure only slightly resembles the house of years ago. Constructed in the late 19th Century, it is the largest home in the immediate area and has undergone extensive alteration. As was the custom in the Victorian Era, Joseph Hensler, a renowned brewer, built his house directly across the street from his brewery so that he could supervise operations at all times. Some original pieces, including stained glass windows, woodwork and interior arches, have been preserved by the present owner. A lovely carriage house, long used as a local church, was leveled in recent years to make room for parking.

(18) NEWARK PUBLIC BATHS. Referred to as the Eastside Public Baths, this structure was erected in 1925 and was one of a dozen that serviced residents throughout Newark. One sign posted over the entrance read, "After Wednesday, all who desire are to be given opportunity to take dips." Over the years, a disproportionate amount of men to women users has been the rule. The Baths are still open to the public and are widely used by Ironbound residents.

(19) ST. STEPHAN'S UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST. This quaint German structure dominates the Ferry Street-Wilcox Avenue intersection, forming one of the nicest street vistas in the city. Built in 1874, in an area that was then largely German, St. Stephan's is a fine example of a Romanesque red-brick church, but its steeple gives a rather subtle Georgian-Colonial effect. The interior features imported German woodcarved reredos with a merry-go-round and rotating statues, pulpit and outstanding Italian paintings. The architect was George Staehlin and many of the fine interior pieces are donations of the Hensler family.

The church is on the National Register of Historic Places.

(20) VORWAERTS TURN VEREIN HALL. The earliest listing for this structure is in the 1889 directory. Built on property once owned by St. James Church, this brick and brownstone edifice housed a German fraternal organization. The name can be translated into the Forward Social Club and perhaps the ideology and concern for social welfare is reflected in the word Vorwaerts (forward) cut into the facade of the building. In the 1930's, the structure served as an outlet for the Great Atlantic and Pacific Tea Company.

(21) KCEL PLASTICS PLANT. Founded in 1872, this complex was first known as the Celluloid Corporation of America. The company was founded by John W. Hyatt, who in 1868, invented celluloid. His discovery was, in fact, the first plastic cellulose nitrate, from which the entire plastics industry has grown. In the late 1880's, the company manufactured both the raw materials and the fabricated products including the famous "iron" collars and cuffs, pipe bits, beer scrapers, organ stopkeys and many other items. The complex was constructed prior to the residential development of the Ironbound which was then mostly farmland and meadows. Celluloid manufacturing ceased in 1949.

(22) ST. ALOYSIUS ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH. Gothic in style, this handsome brownstone structure was built in 1881 in a largely Irish area of the Ironbound. The Ballantine brewing empire, located directly across the street, made the principal donation to construct the church. Architect Jeremiah O'Rourke of Newark designed the building, which is noted for its rich interior.

(23) P. BALLANTINE & SONS BREWERY. Closed in 1972, this once substantial complex is now partly demolished. Built by Peter Ballantine after his move from High Street about 1840, this industrial complex was at one time the largest brewing establishment in the United States. Parts of some buildings are still standing and being used commercially.

(24) JACKSON STREET SWING BRIDGE. Opened to traffic on November 25, 1897, this steam powered bridge is under the joint control of Essex and Hudson Counties. Now in a state of disrepair, and soon to undergo overhauling, the span of the bridge is 705 feet and connects the Ironbound to the town of Harrison.

Though not on the tour route, the following organizations are worth seeing:

(25) SAINT BENEDICT'S CATHOLIC CHURCH. Constructed in 1882 in what was then a largely German area, this church is a red-brick, Romanesque structure. With its 100' tower and gentle arches, the church is a dignified representation of a Victorian era Romanesque building, finished in an age when most others were excessive. Saint Benedict's is the second oldest church to serve German Catholics in Newark. The original edifice and school were destroyed by a storm and the present site is nearing its 100th anniversary.

(26) IRONBOUND AMBULANCE SQUAD, Inc. Founded in 1952 to serve the large residential and industrial populations of the area, this organization continues to be a major point of pride in the neighborhood. This new, modern headquarters was completed in 1961 with the most up-to-date equipment.



Ferry Street epitomizes the vibrant nature of the Ironbound.

This Ironbound guide was published by the NEWARK PRESERVATION & LANDMARKS COMMITTEE in April, 1977. It was reprinted by the Committee in January, 1980. The guide was prepared by Anthony Vacca and Jack Sheehan with the co-operation of Ron Dusk, Margaret Harwood, Elizabeth Del Tufo, Susan Lovalato and the Greater Newark Chamber of Commerce.

Copies of this brochure are available from the NEWARK PRESERVATION & LANDMARKS COMMITTEE, 35 James Street, Newark, NJ 07102. Permission to reprint this guide must be received from the Committee in writing.

The cover photograph of Saint James Church is courtesy of the NEWARK PUBLIC LIBRARY.

The reprinting of this guide was made possible, in part, by a grant from the GERALDINE R. DODGE FOUNDATION.

